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OPERATIONAL DRESS UNIFORM (ODU) UPDATE

ODU distribution to the active duty workforce continues on schedule for completion on 30 September 2004. We expect to have distributed over 100,000 uniforms by the first week in April. As I indicated in a recent ALCOAST authorizing the release of Category 2 requisitions, the rollout of Category 1 orders is nearly complete. That said, it is important to note that "nearly" is a relative term, and that there are still thousands of Category 1 uniforms to be shipped. Category 1 units that have not yet received their orders should not panic . . . you are on the list and the Uniform Distribution Center (UDC) is working to get your uniforms in the mail as soon as possible.

Earlier this month, in conjunction with reaching the one-third point in the distribution process (80,000 uniforms), my staff analyzed the distribution rates for each of the 83 different size tops and 27 different size pants. The analysis revealed that, while the distribution of pants continues in near-alignment with our predictive model (based on three years of historic SDB sales), the distribution of core-size ODU tops is outpacing production. Sometimes, this has resulted in a brief slowdown or an increase in partial shipments. Based on this analysis, we recently modified the existing contract to increase the production of high-demand sizes. The manufacturer has agreed to adjust their production schedule immediately to meet the Coast Guard's specific needs . . . this is really good news for us because the normal uniform production process has a 6-week delay in adjustments automatically built into it. We expect to start receiving additional core-size uniforms in the next two weeks rather than in late May. In the interim, the UDC will work to maintain their momentum by maximizing the use of partial shipments.

In recent weeks, we have received some inquiries regarding ODU shrinkage and colorfastness. As indicated on the label, the ODU is intended to be washed in warm (less than 130 deg) water, and should not be subject to extreme drying temperatures. Unlike the camouflage BDU, which is made of the same basic fabric, the ODU does not have a multicolored over-printing which helps mask fading. It is important that laundering instructions be followed carefully. This will require greater attention on major cutters with large industrial washers and dryers. The ship's engineers and laundry personnel will have to team up to best meet this requirement. As has long been the case with the work uniform, there is no practical way to counter the effects of saltwater washing.

Coast Guard Uniform Regulations specify metal collar insignia and sew-on qualification insignia as standard with the ODU, and sew-on embroidered collar insignia as optional. However, sew-on collar insignia and qualification insignia are not yet available through the UDC. Safety permitting, metal qualification insignia are authorized pending the availability of the sew-on equivalent. We are in the process of awarding a long-term contract for sew-on insignia, devices, and badges (e.g. cutterman, coxswain, etc.), and expect them to be available through the UDC by the end of the year.

Some of you have asked about the mandatory use of the blousing bands that are included in your initial ODU issue. The use of these bands is not mandatory. Uniform regulations simply require that, when worn with high-top safety boots, trousers be bloused at the top of the boot. This can be accomplished through the use of blousing bands or by tucking the pants into the boots to form a uniform (Marine, Navy, Coast Guard) bloused appearance, as opposed to the folded or "pegged" Army appearance. Per the Uniform Regulations, blousing is not required when the ODU is worn with boat shoes.

We continue to make every effort to outfit our entire workforce as quickly as possible. We intend to re-analyze the distribution data at the 70% point to determine if further contract modifications will be required. ODU rollout questions should be direct to CWO Sandie Robillard (G-WPM-1), 202-267-1192.

Regards,

RADM Kenneth T. Venuto
Ken Venuto

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